

say of the treatment in Hampstead, where it was tried on an extensive scale; not only it, but almost every other treatment, reasonable or unreasonable, which anyone could suggest, with the same results—viz., unvaccinated cases little or no impression. Vaccinated cases, which I hold are not true small-pox, end principally in aborting rash, treat them or not treat them.

Yours, &c.,

M. H. TAYLOR, M.B.

Johnstone, N.B., Aug. 28th, 1878.

THE RHEUMATIC ORIGIN OF CHOREA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I venture to ask Dr. Sturges to add to the value of his paper in your last week's issue by filling up what seems to be an important omission—viz., some notice of the family history of his choreic cases; because, judging only from my own experience, if I had to decide whether chorea was rheumatic in origin or not, by the previous or subsequent occurrence of rheumatic fever in choreic individuals, I should certainly arrive at the same conclusion as does Dr. Sturges. But when we go back to the family history the case is far otherwise. I can only refer at the moment to thirty-two cases of chorea in children which have come under my own care, and of these *nineteen* have a rheumatic, and two a gouty family history; though only one of the patients had previously suffered from rheumatic fever. The history of rheumatism is not always so definite, nor the members of the family attacked so close relatives to the choreic, as could perhaps be wished; but a sufficiently strong body of evidence is thus afforded in favour of rheumatic chorea, compared with which the history of rheumatism in the choreic themselves is as nothing. So strong, indeed, does it seem to me to be that it has reconverted me to the opinions of the previous observers which Dr. Sturges tries to combat, and leads me to consider the rheumatic diathesis one of the most frequent, persistent, and multiform with which we have to deal in childhood. This, however, is only an opinion. Dr. Sturges will, I am sure, forgive me for asking a little more of his valuable experience upon a question which is certainly both interesting and important.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Sept. 3rd, 1878.

JAMES F. GOODHART.

THE VIOLET POWDER POISONING CASE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—There is a letter in the last issue of THE LANCET on this subject, signed "H. M. G.," who evidently forgets that when I handed the body over to Professor Tidy, for analysis, it had been dead nearly three weeks, and, as I stated at the trial, was far too much decomposed for Dr. Tidy to form any idea of the sloughs on the body or the thickness of the skin.

To my mind there is no doubt but that the whole of the arsenic found its way into the body by absorption; which I consider proved by the fact that the greatest quantity was found in the liver.

As regards the suggestion that some of the arsenic from the skin might have got mixed up with the viscera during the post-mortem examination (which, by the way, was not suggested by Professor Tidy, but by Mr. Wells, the solicitor for the defence), I can clearly prove this was not the case, as also the idea of "H. M. G." that the arsenic might have been derived from the surface of the body when boiled in the acidulated water in Dr. Tidy's analysis. When my attention was called to the redness of the skin on the child, which was on the third day after birth, on close examination I found it to be most intense in the creases of the body, where the powder could be seen, which caused me directly to suspect it; I at once ordered the child a warm bath, and the use of the powder to be discontinued, taking some of it home to analyse, which I found to contain a large percentage of arsenic. The next morning I told the mother the result of my examination of the powder, and impressed upon her the necessity of bathing the child well, which was done daily. On the fourth day

the sores had assumed a considerable size, and discharged a greenish-yellow matter, when I had bread poultices applied; this treatment was continued until its death, on the tenth day. Although arsenic is sparingly soluble in water, it seems impossible for any to remain on the body after being immersed at least six times in warm water, and the creases where the sores were continually poulticed. As to the powder being inhaled during the application of it to the body, I am inclined to think that a very small quantity found its way into the system by this means. In the first place the nurse would inhale by far the larger quantity, from the position of her face whilst applying it to the child, when we should have expected symptoms of arsenical poisoning in her; and again in this case there was an entire absence of any symptom of arsenical poisoning by the mouth, neither diarrhoea nor sickness, nor could I detect at the post-mortem examination any signs in the throat of arsenical poisoning. Taking into consideration the delicate structure of the infant skin, that at each powdering ten or fifteen grains of arsenic would be distributed over the body each time, and that it had five or six dressings with the powder, it is not at all surprising that Professor Tidy obtained such a large quantity of arsenic in his analysis.

I remain, Sir, yours truly,

HENRY BROWNE, L.R.C.P.E., L.S.A.

Lynton House, Albion-road, Stoke Newington,
September 2nd, 1878.

ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It would simplify matters greatly if some one would inform us what stamp of man is most suited to become a military medical officer, and also what sort of a career he should lead in the service. Next, we would require to find what advantages the State should offer with success to induce such men to enter the army, and then the proper position in which to place them in order that they might practise their profession with advantage to all parties.

Now, I would like to see military surgeons, well-read, sound professional men, taking pride in their profession, and being additionally proud in serving Her Majesty in an honourable position. Smartness being the attribute of the soldier, our surgeons must not be exceptions. Let them be of the social stamp, preferring to mess with their brother officers to a chop in lodgings. If they are able to take an oar in a regimental boat, and find enjoyment in the ball-room, all the better. A man of the above stamp will prefer living in barracks; he will remain a bachelor for years; he will be always about when wanted. He will hear of Private S. "gone sick this morning," because the sergeant-major pulled him up for so-and-so. Private S. will therefore receive a more thorough examination as to his illness, &c. Our surgeon will take a pride in his regiment; will weed out the sickly; and, in his rambles through the barracks, he will sometimes find a man looking pale and thin. On questioning him he will be told of a bad cough, little sleep, &c., "but I did not like to report sick, sir." Then, by a little good advice, telling the man to come and see him without his name being on the sick report &c., the service will probably be saved a soldier of the good old sort. Women and children will report themselves sick sooner than they would to a stranger.

Now, Sir, if this is a good type of a military surgeon, does the State hold out sufficient inducements to bring him into the service, and also give him the opportunity of following the course pointed out? I think not. At present the medical officer, though of the above type, lives out of barracks if possible; he dines sometimes at the mess, sometimes at the club; he cannot ask his friends to mess, being only an honorary member. He cultivates the society of civilians more than that of military men. He has no attractions in barracks when his professional work is over. He cares little for the corps whose health he looks after. He loses the advantages derived from that bond of union—the basis of so many of the good social qualities observable in the British officer—namely, the mess.

The above conclusions are come to by one who has been in a good regiment, and was sorry to see the Warrant of '73; but who subsequently studied and advocated the "unification scheme" for over twelve months, and who now admits